

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

INTRODUCED BY J. PETERSON

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO MANAGE THE CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN A MANNER THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE ENABLING LEGISLATION AND WITH LOCAL MONTANA NEEDS AND VALUES; AND REQUESTING BETTER COMMUNICATION WITH SURROUNDING CONSERVATION DISTRICTS.

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 7509, dated December 11, 1936, established the Fort Peck Game Range, which was converted in 1976 to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR), for the conservation and development of natural wildlife resources and for the protection and improvement of public grazing lands and natural forage resources; and

WHEREAS, Montana conservation districts are political subdivisions of the State of Montana, authorized by the Legislature in 1939, whose primary function is to conduct local activities to promote the conservation of natural resources in the district; and

WHEREAS, land management approaches used on the CMR directly impact adjacent private lands; and

WHEREAS, wildlife managed on the CMR consistently travel outside the refuge onto private land, creating environmental and economic impacts such as the spread of disease and noxious weeds; and

WHEREAS, the availability of livestock grazing on the CMR greatly influences private land use, conservation practices, and local economies surrounding the CMR; and

WHEREAS, weed infestations originating on the CMR are spread to and have negative impacts on surrounding private land; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is drafting a comprehensive conservation plan for the CMR that will guide the agency's management actions through 2025; and

WHEREAS, final CMR management decisions are made by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff in Denver, Colorado, but the staff is not directly impacted by those management decisions, while owners of private land surrounding the refuge who are represented by Montana conservation districts, are directly impacted by those management decisions.

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
2 STATE OF MONTANA:

3 That the State of Montana formally requests that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manage the Charles  
4 M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in a manner that is consistent with the enabling legislation, taking into account  
5 local natural resource conservation needs.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service be urged to conduct more open  
7 and timely communication with Montana conservation districts surrounding the Charles M. Russell National  
8 Wildlife Refuge in developing the comprehensive conservation plan and in managing and conserving the natural  
9 resources of the refuge in a manner that is sensitive to the impacts of the refuge on owners of adjacent private  
10 land.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to the Montana  
12 Congressional Delegation and to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

13 - END -